

The Journey to Flash 8

Learn the differences between Flash MX and Flash 8! Lots of improvements were made to the newest version of Macromedia Studio, so sit back and learn how to use these new features to create snazzy animations with Flash. If time permits, improved Flash/Dreamweaver integration (adding video, etc.) will be shared.


Flash Professional 8 vs. Basic 8 (get the Pro version!!!)

The Studio Feature Matrix		
Table 1: Comparison of Flash Professional 8 and Flash Basic 8		
Feature	Flash Professional 8	Flash Basic 8
Expressiveness	*	
Filters (Graphic Effects)	*	
Blend Modes	*	
Advanced Easing Control for Animation	*	
ActionScript 2.0	*	*
Object-based drawing mode	*	*
FlashType Text Rendering Engine	*	*
	(advanced options)	
Templates	*	*
PDF & EPS (Adobe Illustrator 10) support	*	*
Data Components	*	
UI Components	*	*
	(advanced set)	(basic set)
Mobile Authoring		
Publish to Flash Lite	*	
Interactive Mobile Device Emulator	*	
Mobile Templates	*	
External Players	*	
MIDI Ring Tone Support	*	
Professional Video		
Embedded Video	*	*
External Video	*	
Advanced Video Import Workflow		

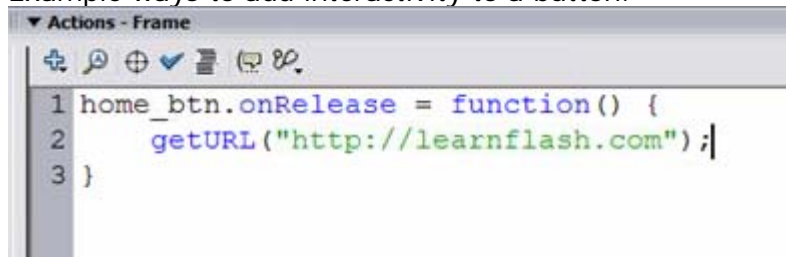
The best change...

Flash Professional 8 now has many of the popular filters we have been using in Adobe Photoshop for years. Now with Flash you can easily add drop shadows, blur, bevel, and glow.

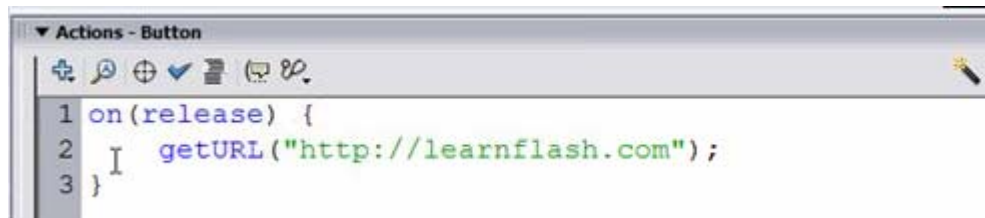
New to Flash? Quirky things....

- Vector disappearing act (can be avoided now with the “object drawing” button)
- Pay attention to your timeline and label layers; it’s easy to get “inside” an object and not know where you are
- Know when to use what (graphic vs. movie clip)
-  Circle at the top of a text box means single line, no wrap; resize box to get a square that will wrap
- Things don’t move right? Watch your “snaps” (Snap to object; magnets)
- When you create a graphic or movie clip, there is an anchor point. That’s the “axis” so if you are going to rotate the object using tweens, pay careful attention to the location of the “axis” (think about a clock; move point with Free Transform) NOTE: If you are rotating/animating with Actionscript, it uses the registration point instead
- Adding actions is easy, but you must be careful. Actionscript is case sensitive.
- More on actions: If you add to the frame, a little A will appear in the frame (Actions-Frame); if you add to an object, your Actions panel should say Actions-Button (or whatever object you are clicked on)

Example ways to add interactivity to a button:



(above—remember to give symbol an instance name (home_btn))



Cool things about Flash 8

- New filters and special effects for text and images
- Drop shadows
- “Real” shadows on movie clips
- Blend modes
- Gradients on strokes
- Better “multiple” library interface
- Group panels with tabs
- Text resizing makes more sense (no more double click inside first)
- “Script assist” (AKA Normal mode in Flash MX) is back for Actions
- Line corners (Cap and Join)
- Neat control of graphic symbol for recurring, timed animation (Swap)

My Most Irritating Feature of Flash 8

Automatic grouping of shapes (watch the button!)

A Few Easy Examples

Fog/Smoke:

- Draw squiggles with paintbrush across the stage; convert them to a movie clip
- To make it "loop", inside the movie clip, select all of it (use Free Transform), hold Alt+Shift+drag to drag a copy side by side
- Highlight that whole thing with the black arrow and convert to a movie clip symbol (F8)
- Insert a keyframe at 200 (F6); use Free Transform, hold shift, and click and drag just short of them matching up (so the loop won't pause)
- Right click on the timeline and Insert Motion Tween
- Exit the symbol editing and return to the Scene
- Click the movie clip and in the Property Inspector, select the Filters tab
- Click the plus sign and choose Blur; raise to roughly 70% or so
- Alter transparency if needed in Property Inspector (under Color, Alpha)

Blending Process:

- Convert the objects that you want to blend to either a button or movie clip symbol (blending modes do not work with graphic symbols).
- Drag the symbol over another object on the Stage so that there is at least some overlap. The symbol can be on the same layer as the second object or they can be on separate layers.
- Select your symbol from the Properties inspector and choose a desired Blending mode. Blending modes are composed of the following elements:
 - Base color is the color of pixels underneath the blending color.
 - Blending color is the color to which the blending is applied.
 - Opacity is the degree of transparency to which the blending is applied.
 - Result color is the result of the blending effect on the base color.

Create a "Real" Drop Shadow to an object:

- If a graphic, import to the Stage, trace bitmap (Bitmap, Trace bitmap), delete the white areas (change stage to a color so you can see better)
- Convert the imported, cleaned-up graphic to a movie clip
- Select the movie clip (or whatever) object whose shadow you want to create/skew.
- Duplicate (select Edit > Duplicate) the source movie clip or text object.
- Select the duplicated object, and skew it using the Free Transform tool (Modify > Transform > Rotate and Skew).
- Apply the Drop Shadow filter to the duplicated movie clip or text object, and select the Hide Object check box. The duplicated object is hidden from view, leaving only the skewed shadow.
- Adjust the Drop Shadow filter settings and the angle of the skewed drop shadow until you achieve the look you want.

Insert video:

- Move your video source file into your working folder (it has to be published with the swf to work)
- File, Import, Import Video
- Locate video, Next
- Progressive download, Next
- Choose options—quality (click Show Advanced Settings for resize or trimming); Next
- Choose skin (watch buttons if you want a stop/play/mute, etc.)

Using a Template: Photo Slideshow Gallery in Flash 8.0

1. Create and export your images

- Each image should have a size of **640 x 480** pixels.
- Export the images in a **numbered sequence**. For example, for three files, the names could be photo1.jpg, photo2.jpg, and photo3.jpg.

2. Create the photo slideshow file and import the images

- Open **Flash 8.0**. Click on **File/New**. Chose the **Templates** tab. Select **Photo Slideshows**. Click on **OK**. You will see a ready-made Flash photo slideshow created. Press **Ctrl+Enter** to view the file. Press the auto play button to view the slideshow.
- To replace the images with your own, select the bottom layer called **picture layer** and click on the trash can icon to delete it.
- Create a new layer by clicking the Insert Layer button, and name this new layer **My Photos**. Make sure that this new layer is the bottom layer.
- Select the first blank keyframe in the My Photos layer, select **File > Import > Import to Stage**, and locate your photo sequence. Select the first image in the series, click **Add**, and click **Import**. Flash recognizes that your image is part of a series and asks you to import all files in the series. Click **Yes** to complete the import process. Flash places each image on separate keyframes. You can move the images so they are centered in the stage or you can choose the images on the stage and make the **X and Y coordinates 0** so they are centered in the stage.
- Your images appear in the Library panel and can be replaced later if needed by double clicking on the image in the library window and clicking on the import button to select the new image file.
- You can safely delete the old images.
- If you have more than four images, make sure that all the other layers have an equal number of frames. Select the frame and click on F5 to add new frames.
- Change the captions for the images, by replacing the text in the **Captions** layer and adding new keyframes with text for the new images. You do not have to worry about the photo number field. The template automatically determines how many images are in your document and indicates which photo you are currently using.
- Change the title in the **Title, Date** layer.
- Press **Ctrl+Enter** to view the completed Flash Photo Slideshow.

Not New, But Fun...

Create a mask:

- Insert the item(s) you want to be able to see
- Draw a shape on a higher layer that will be the mask (thing you will “see through”)
- Right click the shape’s layer and set to mask
- Lock both layers to see the effect
- You can animate masks, too. It’s most effective to use Shape Tweens.

Custom cursor:

- Create a new movie clip for your cursor. Be sure the top of the cursor meets the registration point.
- Name your symbol CursorNew_mc (or whatever)
- At the main timeline, be sure your cursor is on the Stage
- Name the cursor cnew in the Property Inspector (the Instance Name)
- In the first frame, add the following script in the Actions panel:

```
Mouse.hide()  
startDrag(cnew,true)
```

Trace bitmap (convert clipart to editable/changeable):

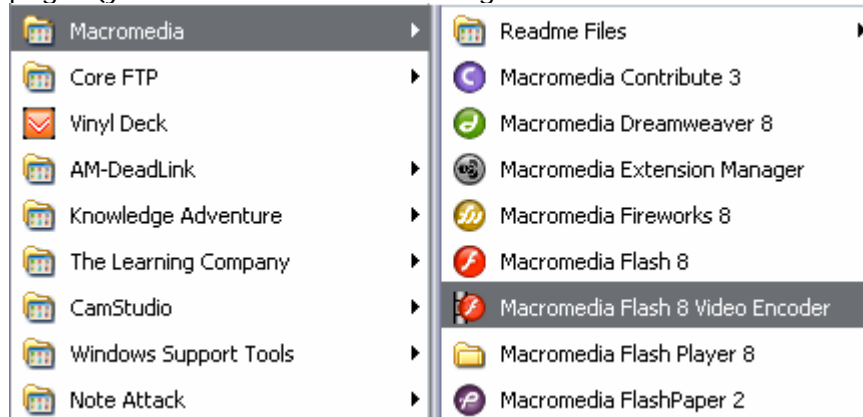
- Import a clipart; if it has a white background, that’s okay
- Modify, Bitmap, Trace Bitmap (experiment with settings)
- Click off of it; click on white patches and delete them
- Use paint bucket to make color changes, etc.

NOTES

Dreamweaver 8

Working with Flash in Dreamweaver is easier than ever. You can add Flash video to a Web page in as few as five clicks with an easy-to-use wizard. You can also preview Flash content and set Flash file parameters with an inspector. Improvements aren't just Flash-related, of course.

1. Open Dreamweaver 8 and create a new page.
2. Click the mouse and select Insert > Media > Flash Video...
3. Select the Video Type pop-down menu. (usually Progressive)
4. After you select Progressive Download click the Browse button and navigate, using the Select File dialog box, to the location of the FLV file you want to include in the page. (you can convert to FLV using the video encoder that comes with Studio)



5. Click the Skin pop down and select a skin.

Having chosen the skin, you really don't have much more to do. Click the Detect Size button and the video's dimensions are pulled from the FLV's metadata and applied to the size of the player. Finally you have to decide whether or not to select the "Auto play" and "Auto rewind" buttons. If you want the movie to start playing as soon as it loads, select "Auto play".

The last choice is whether you want your visitors to obtain the latest copy of the Flash Player which, as of this writing, is Flash Player 8. Selecting this adds a detection script to your page and, if the user doesn't have the Flash 8 Player, he or she is redirected. This step is both optional and customizable.

When you click OK to close the Flash Video dialog box, two swf files - one is the player and the other is the skin - are added to the directory where you saved the page. They must be uploaded to the server for the video to play properly.

Finally, can you change your mind - switch the skin or the FLV, or change and of the settings after you create the player? The answer is yes. The video will appear on your page as a gray box with a FLV icon in the middle. Click the video and the Property inspector will change to reflect the values in the Flash Video dialog box.

Adapted from:

<http://www.flashnewz.com/flashnewz-5-20051104AddingFlashVideotoDreamweaver8.html>

Acknowledgements

Info:

<http://www.devx.com/webdev/Article/28857>

<http://www.tizag.com/flashTutorial/flashmxvsflash8.php>

http://store.adobe.com/store/en_us/popup/software/flash/comparison.html

<http://www.adobepress.com/articles/index.asp?st=55266>

Some Online Tutorials:

<http://layersmagazine.com/flash-slideshow-image-gallery.html>

<http://layersmagazine.com/anyone-have-a-match.html>

<http://layersmagazine.com/custom-video-player.html>

<http://www.quazen.com/tags/flash>

<http://www.video-animation.com/> (video tutorials by Joe Gilbert)

<http://www.kirupa.com/developer/flash/index.htm>

<http://www.entheosweb.com/Flash/default.asp> (slideshow tutorial from here)

<http://www.cartoonsmart.com>

<http://www.learnflash.com>

Neat Flash Examples:

<http://www.propointgraphics.com/products-flash-presentations.html>

To save YouTube videos as FLV to insert in flash:

<http://www.youtubex.com>

For Flash lessons, see my website:

<http://lessonplans.btskinner.com>

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InDesign handout is on Tonya's website at <http://lessonplans.btskinner.com/dtp.html>